

## Demographic Characteristics of 1996 Hired Farmworkers

An average of over 112 million persons ages 15 and older were employed per week at wage and salary jobs in the United States in 1996 (table 1).<sup>3</sup> Of these, 906,000 persons (less than 1 percent) identified hired farmwork (that is, farmwork for cash wages or salary) as their primary employment. Hired farmworkers include people paid to manage farms for employers, supervisors of farmworkers, and farm and nursery workers. The group includes those hired directly by the farmer, as well as those employed by farm labor contractors.

The annual average number of people working per week as hired farmworkers decreased from 1990 through 1994, and then increased (figure 1 and appendix table 1). Meanwhile, the average number of all wage and salary workers (all employed people including hired farmworkers) per week decreased between 1990 and 1991, and then began increasing (figure 2 and appendix table 2).

Although the number of employed hired farmworkers changes, the workers' basic characteristics have remained unchanged. Hired farmworkers tend to be younger and less educated than all wage and salary workers and are more likely to be male, Hispanic, and never married. Demographic information on hired farmworkers and all wage and salary workers is shown in appendix tables 1 and 2, respectively.

### Gender, Age, and Marital Status

Males accounted for about 84 percent of hired farmworkers and about 52 percent of all wage and salary workers in 1996 (table 1). These percentages have remained constant in recent years (appendix tables 1 and 2).

Hired farmworkers were younger than all wage and salary workers in 1996, as they have been throughout the 1990's (appendix tables 1 and 2). Slightly over 17 percent of hired farmworkers were less than 20 years old, compared with only 6 percent of all wage and salary workers (table 1). About half (52 percent) of hired farmworkers were under 35 years of age and

about 28 percent were less than 25 years old (table 1). In comparison, 43 percent of all wage and salary workers were under 35 years old and 17 percent were under 25 years old (table 1). Hired farmworkers' youth may have contributed to both a larger percentage of never-married hired farmworkers (36 percent) than all wage and salary workers (28 percent) and a larger percentage of all wage and salary workers (15 percent) than hired farmworkers (8 percent) that were widowed, divorced, or separated (table 1).

Figure 1  
**Annual average number of hired farmworkers, 15 years and older, employed per week**



Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

Figure 2  
**Annual average number of all wage and salary workers, 15 years and older, employed per week**



Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

<sup>3</sup> Wage and salary workers are synonymous with employed persons, as defined in the Glossary.

**Table 1—Demographic characteristics of hired farmworkers and all wage and salary workers, 1996**

| Characteristics                    | Annual averages   |                |                             |                |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
|                                    | Hired farmworkers |                | All wage and salary workers |                |
|                                    | <i>Thousands</i>  | <i>Percent</i> | <i>Thousands</i>            | <i>Percent</i> |
| All                                | 906               | 100            | 112,142                     | 100            |
| Gender:                            |                   |                |                             |                |
| Male                               | 763               | 84.2           | 58,531                      | 52.2           |
| Female                             | 143               | 15.8           | 53,611                      | 47.8           |
| Racial/ethnic group:               |                   |                |                             |                |
| White                              | 534               | 58.9           | 84,161                      | 75.0           |
| Hispanic                           | 326               | 36.0           | 10,809                      | 9.7            |
| Black and "other"                  | 46                | 5.1            | 17,172                      | 15.3           |
| Age (years):                       |                   |                |                             |                |
| Less than 20                       | 155               | 17.1           | 6,754                       | 6.0            |
| 20-24                              | 98                | 10.8           | 11,727                      | 10.5           |
| 25-34                              | 218               | 24.1           | 29,522                      | 26.3           |
| 35-44                              | 199               | 21.9           | 30,558                      | 27.2           |
| 45-54                              | 123               | 13.6           | 21,582                      | 19.2           |
| 55 and older                       | 113               | 12.5           | 12,000                      | 10.7           |
| Median age                         |                   | 34             |                             | 37             |
| Marital status:                    |                   |                |                             |                |
| Married                            | 510               | 56.3           | 64,769                      | 58.0           |
| Widowed, divorced,<br>or separated | 74                | 8.1            | 16,217                      | 14.5           |
| Never married                      | 322               | 35.6           | 31,156                      | 27.5           |
| Schooling completed: <sup>1</sup>  |                   |                |                             |                |
| 0-4 years                          | 119               | 13.1           | 818                         | 0.7            |
| 5-8 years                          | 181               | 19.9           | 3,192                       | 2.9            |
| 9-11 years                         | 219               | 24.2           | 11,974                      | 9.9            |
| 12 years                           | 230               | 25.4           | 36,262                      | 32.3           |
| 13 or more years                   | 167               | 17.4           | 60,796                      | 54.2           |

<sup>1</sup>Educational attainment levels, beginning January 1992, were revised to reflect degrees or diplomas received rather than years of school completed.

Note: Data for 1994 and later years are not directly comparable with data for 1993 and earlier years because of changes in survey design.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

### Racial/Ethnic Group

Hired farmworkers were over one-third (36 percent) Hispanic in 1996, compared with about one-tenth of the total wage and salary work force (table 1). However, according to the survey results, between 1994 and 1996 the percentage of hired farmworkers who were Hispanic decreased while the percentage of all wage and salary workers who were Hispanic remained unchanged (appendix tables 1 and 2).

Both the number and percentage of white hired farmworkers increased from 406,000 (51 percent) to 534,000 (59 percent) during this period. During the same period, the number of Hispanic, and black and "other" hired farmworkers did not change significantly, but the percentage of Hispanic hired farmworkers decreased from about 42 percent to 36 percent (appendix table 1).

**Table 2—Citizenship status of hired farmworkers and all wage and salary workers, 1996**

| Citizenship status                                | Annual averages   |                             |
|---|-------------------|-----------------------------|
|   | Hired farmworkers | All wage and salary workers |
|   | <i>Thousands</i>  |                             |
| Total   | 906               | 112,142                     |
|   | <i>Percent</i>    |                             |
| Total   | 100               | 100                         |
| Native, born in the United States                 | 67.3              | 87.9                        |
| Native, born in Puerto Rico or U.S. outlying area | 0.3               | 0.5                         |
| Native, born abroad of American parent(s)         | 1.2               | 1.0                         |
| Foreign born, U.S. citizen by naturalization      | 2.8               | 3.6                         |
| Foreign born, not a U.S. citizen                  | 28.4              | 7.0                         |

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

### Citizenship Status

About 67 percent of hired farmworkers were born in the United States and 28 percent were foreign born and were not U.S. citizens (table 2). In comparison, 88 percent of all wage and salary workers were native born and 7 percent were foreign born and not U.S. citizens (table 2). Most hired farmworkers (98 percent) and more than half of all wage and salary workers who were foreign born and not U.S. citizens were Hispanic (table 3). About three-fourths of Hispanic hired farmworkers were not U.S. citizens.

The number of hired farmworkers who were native-born citizens increased from 499,000 in 1994 to 525,000 in 1995, and to 610,000 in 1996.<sup>4</sup> However, native-born citizens as a percentage of total workers increased only between 1995 (62 percent) and 1996 (67 percent). The number of noncitizen hired farmworkers decreased from 310,000 in 1995 to 257,000 in 1996.<sup>4</sup> As a percent of total hired farmworkers, noncitizens decreased from 1994 (36 percent) to 1995 (34 percent) to 1996 (28 percent).

Noncitizen hired farmworkers were employed in crop production (70 percent), livestock production (18 per-

<sup>4</sup> Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

**Table 3—Foreign-born workers who were not citizens of the United States: Gender, race, age, and education characteristics, 1996**

| Characteristic                    | Annual averages   |                             |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
|                                   | Hired farmworkers | All wage and salary workers |
|                                   | <i>Thousands</i>  |                             |
| Total                             | 257               | 7,863                       |
|                                   | <i>Percent</i>    |                             |
| Total                             | 100               | 100                         |
| Gender:                           |                   |                             |
| Male                              | 88.0              | 61.3                        |
| Female                            | 12.0              | 38.7                        |
| Race/ethnic:                      |                   |                             |
| White                             | 0.5               | 18.8                        |
| Hispanic                          | 97.8              | 53.9                        |
| Black and other                   | 1.7               | 27.3                        |
| Age (years):                      |                   |                             |
| Less than 20                      | 2.7               | 3.9                         |
| 20-24                             | 14.5              | 12.5                        |
| 25-34                             | 34.3              | 35.6                        |
| 35-44                             | 25.7              | 27.2                        |
| 45-54                             | 16.1              | 14.0                        |
| 55 and older                      | 6.7               | 6.8                         |
| Schooling completed: <sup>1</sup> |                   |                             |
| 0-4 years                         | 39.0              | 7.2                         |
| 5-8 years                         | 39.5              | 17.5                        |
| 9-11 years                        | 12.4              | 14.8                        |
| 12 years                          | 6.1               | 23.8                        |
| 13 years and more                 | 3.0               | 36.7                        |

<sup>1</sup> Education attainment levels, beginning January 1992, were revised to reflect degrees or diplomas received rather than years of school completed. Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

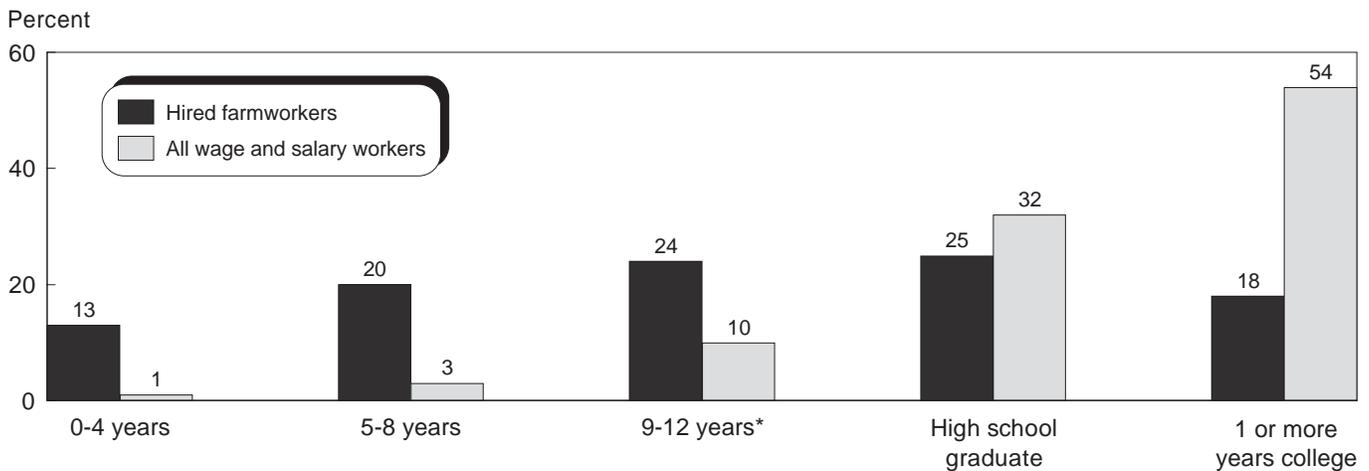
cent), and other agriculture (13 percent). The distribution of noncitizen hired farmworkers among the industries did not differ from 1994 to 1996.

### Education

Hired farmworkers tend to be less educated than other workers. One-third of hired farmworkers had less than a ninth-grade education in 1996, compared with less than 4 percent of all wage and salary workers (table 1 and figure 3). Over half (57 percent) of hired farmworkers had not completed high school compared with 14 percent of all wage and salary workers (table 1 and figure 3). Percentages for hired farmworkers

Figure 3

**Distribution of hired farmworkers and all wage and salary workers by highest completed education level, 1996**

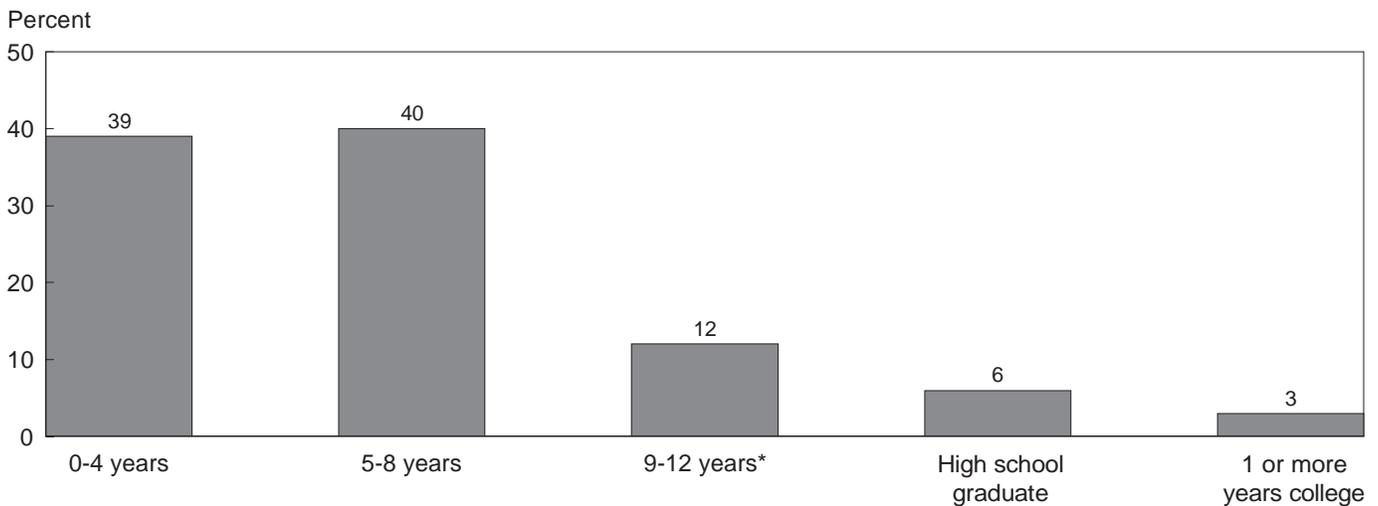


\*But did not graduate.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

Figure 4

**Distribution of noncitizen hired farmworkers by highest completed education level, 1996**



\*But did not graduate.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

have not changed significantly since 1992, while educational attainment for all wage and salary workers has increased (appendix tables 1 and 2). These data indicate that most hired farmworkers lack the literacy skills needed in a complex technological society (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991).

Hired farmworkers' educational attainment did not vary significantly by gender, but did vary significantly by racial/ethnic group (table 4). Almost 89 percent of Hispanic hired farmworkers had attained less than a high school education, and about 34 percent had no

schooling beyond fourth grade in 1996, compared with 38 and 1 percent, respectively, of white hired farmworkers.

Almost 40 percent of the noncitizen hired farmworkers, who are disproportionately Hispanic, completed less than 5 years of education and over 90 percent had not graduated from high school (figure 4).

Educational levels of noncitizen hired farmworkers and wage and salary workers were significantly lower than the averages for all hired farmworkers and all wage and salary workers.

**Table 4—Education completed by hired farmworkers, by gender and racial/ethnic group, 1996<sup>1</sup>**

| Years of education completed | Annual averages |        |                         |          |                   |
|------------------------------|-----------------|--------|-------------------------|----------|-------------------|
|                              | Male            | Female | White                   | Hispanic | Black and "other" |
| Total                        | 763             | 143    | <i>Thousands</i><br>534 | 326      | 46                |
| Total                        | 100.0           | 100.0  | <i>Percent</i><br>100.0 | 100.0    | 100.0             |
| 0-4                          | 13.5            | 11.2   | 0.7                     | 34.4     | — <sup>2</sup>    |
| 5-8                          | 20.2            | 18.4   | 8.2                     | 39.7     | —                 |
| 9-11                         | 24.9            | 20.1   | 29.2                    | 14.8     | —                 |
| 12                           | 24.8            | 29.0   | 35.0                    | 8.5      | —                 |
| 13 or more                   | 16.6            | 21.3   | 26.9                    | 2.6      | —                 |

<sup>1</sup> Educational attainment levels, beginning January 1992, were revised to reflect degrees or diplomas received rather than years of school completed. Therefore, to be included under "12 years of education completed," a diploma, GED, or equivalent degree must have been granted.

<sup>2</sup> Percentages not shown where base is less than 50,000.

Note: Data for 1994 and later years are not directly comparable with data for 1993 and earlier years because of changes in survey design.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

## Unemployment

Unemployed hired farmworkers accounted for almost 2 percent of all unemployed in 1996. A weekly average of 118,000 people (11.5 percent) of the hired farm labor force (last job was hired farmwork) and 6,386,000 people (5.4 percent) in the entire wage and salary labor force were unemployed in 1996 (table 5). Unemployment in the hired farm labor force remained stable in 1994-96 (12.4 to 11.5 percent) while unemployment among all wage and salary workers declined significantly (from 6.1 percent to 5.4 percent). However, the unemployment percentage for hired farmworkers fluctuated more during 1996 (4.15 percent in October to 23.23 percent in March) than for all wage and salary workers (4.82 percent in October to 6.38 percent in January).

Compared with all unemployed wage and salary workers, the unemployed hired farmworkers were more likely to be male, Hispanic, married, less educated, and foreign citizens (table 5). With the exception of marital status, these differences reflect the overall makeup of hired farmworkers and all wage and salary workers.

Unemployed, compared with employed, farmworkers were more likely to be female, Hispanic, black and "other," less educated, and foreign citizens (tables 1, 2, and 5). About 57 percent of all unemployed hired farmworkers were in the West; that number is significantly greater than the 38 percent of all hired farmworkers in that region.

A higher percentage of unemployed in the hired farm labor force than among wage and salary workers gave "job loser/on layoff" and "temporary job ended" as reasons for unemployment (table 6). Given the seasonal nature of hired farmwork, these findings are not surprising.

## Secondary Job Holders

Secondary job holders are workers who held more than one job during the reference week. The job at which the worker spent the most hours was the primary occupation and the job with the next greatest number of work hours was the secondary job.

About 72,000 people who had primary jobs as other than hired farmworkers had secondary jobs as hired farmworkers in 1996 (table 7).<sup>5</sup> These workers were more likely than all hired farmworkers to be female, white, and better educated. According to the survey results, all who listed hired farmwork as their secondary employment were employed in other agricultural establishments. Over half (51 percent) of secondary job holders lived in the Midwest, and almost all (98 percent) were U.S. natives.

<sup>5</sup> Employed people who had either two or more jobs as wage and salary work; were self-employed and also held a wage and salary job; or worked as an unpaid family worker and also held a wage and salary job and reported hired farmwork as their secondary job.

**Table 5—Demographic characteristics of the unemployed, 1996**

| Characteristics   | Annual averages   |                |                             |                |
|---|-------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|----------------|
|   | Hired farmworkers |                | All wage and salary workers |                |
|   | <i>Thousands</i>  | <i>Percent</i> | <i>Thousands</i>            | <i>Percent</i> |
| Total   | 118               | 100            | 6,386                       | 100            |
| Gender:   |                   |                |                             |                |
| Male  | 91                | 77.5           | 2,424                       | 53.6           |
| Female  | 27                | 22.5           | 2,962                       | 46.4           |
| Racial/ethnic group:                                    |                   |                |                             |                |
| White   | 29                | 24.9           | 3,807                       | 59.6           |
| Hispanic  | 71                | 60.1           | 953                         | 14.9           |
| Black and "other"                                       | 18                | 15.0           | 1,626                       | 25.5           |
| Age (years):  |                   |                |                             |                |
| Less than 20  | 20                | 17.2           | 919                         | 14.4           |
| 20-24   | 13                | 11.1           | 1,148                       | 18.0           |
| 25-34   | 34                | 29.0           | 1,653                       | 25.9           |
| 35-44   | 25                | 21.0           | 1,385                       | 21.6           |
| 45-54   | 16                | 13.5           | 804                         | 12.6           |
| 55 and older  | 10                | 8.2            | 477                         | 7.5            |
| Median age  |                   | 31             |                             | 31             |
| Marital status:   |                   |                |                             |                |
| Married   | 67                | 56.7           | 2,394                       | 37.5           |
| Widowed, divorced,<br>or separated                      | 8                 | 7.0            | 1,076                       | 16.8           |
| Never married   | 43                | 36.3           | 2,916                       | 45.7           |
| Schooling completed: <sup>1</sup>                       |                   |                |                             |                |
| 0-4 years   | 30                | 25.1           | 84                          | 1.3            |
| 5-8 years   | 33                | 28.1           | 3,29                        | 5.3            |
| 9-11 years  | 29                | 24.2           | 1,438                       | 22.5           |
| 12 years  | 17                | 14.8           | 2,283                       | 35.8           |
| 13 years or more  | 9                 | 7.8            | 2,241                       | 35.1           |
| Citizenship status:                                     |                   |                |                             |                |
| Native, born in the U.S.                                | 48                | 40.8           | 5415                        | 84.8           |
| Native, born in Puerto<br>Rico or U.S. outlying<br>area | 0                 | 0              | 41                          | 0.6            |
| Native, born abroad of<br>American parent(s)            | 0                 | 0              | 64                          | 1.0            |
| Foreign born, U.S. citizen<br>by naturalization         | 5                 | 4.4            | 208                         | 3.3            |
| Foreign born, not U.S. citizen                          | 65                | 54.8           | 658                         | 10.3           |

<sup>1</sup> Educational attainment levels, beginning January 1992, were revised to reflect degrees or diplomas received rather than years of school completed. Therefore, to be included under "12 years of education completed," a diploma, GED, or equivalent degree must have been granted.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

**Table 6—Reasons for unemployment and duration of unemployment, 1996**

| Item                             | Hired farmworkers |         | All wage and salary workers |         |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|---------|-----------------------------|---------|
|                                  | Thousands         | Percent | Thousands                   | Percent |
| <b>Reasons for unemployment:</b> |                   |         |                             |         |
| Job loser/on layoff              | 55                | 46.7    | 1,039                       | 16.3    |
| Other job loser                  | 7                 | 6.2     | 1,581                       | 24.8    |
| Temporary job ended              | 23                | 19.6    | 640                         | 10.0    |
| Job leaver                       | 1                 | 0.6     | 748                         | 11.7    |
| Re-entrant                       | 32                | 26.9    | 2,378                       | 37.2    |
| <b>Duration of unemployment:</b> |                   |         |                             |         |
| Less than 4 months               | 31                | 26.5    | 1,752                       | 27.4    |
| 4-6 months                       | 16                | 13.2    | 967                         | 15.1    |
| 7-9 months                       | 17                | 14.4    | 746                         | 11.7    |
| 10-12 months                     | 11                | 9.3     | 529                         | 8.3     |
| 13 months and over               | 43                | 36.6    | 2,391                       | 37.4    |
| Median (months)                  | 9                 |         | 8                           |         |

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.

**Table 7—Demographic characteristics of individuals reporting hired farmwork as their secondary job, 1996<sup>1</sup>**

| Characteristics                         | Annual average |         |
|---|----------------|---------|
|   | Thousands      | Percent |
| Total                                   | 72             | 100     |
| <b>Gender:</b>                          |                |         |
| Male                                    | 51             | 71      |
| Female                                  | 21             | 29      |
| <b>Racial/ethnic group:</b>             |                |         |
| White                                   | 69             | 96      |
| Hispanic                                | 0              | 0       |
| Black and other                         | 3              | 4       |
| <b>Age (years):</b>                     |                |         |
| Less than 20                            | 14             | 20      |
| 20-24                                   | 7              | 9       |
| 25-34                                   | 19             | 27      |
| 35-44                                   | 18             | 25      |
| 45-54                                   | 10             | 14      |
| 55 and older                            | 4              | 5       |
| Median age                              | 35             |         |
| <b>Schooling completed:<sup>2</sup></b> |                |         |
| 0-4 years                               | 0              | 0       |
| 5-8 years                               | 3              | 3       |
| 9-11 years                              | 12             | 17      |
| 12 years                                | 33             | 46      |
| 13 years or more                        | 24             | 34      |

<sup>1</sup> Employed people who had either two or more jobs as a wage and salary worker, were self-employed and also held a wage and salary job, or worked as an unpaid family worker and also held a wage and salary job and reported hired farmwork as their secondary job.

<sup>2</sup> Educational attainment levels, beginning January 1992, were revised to reflect degrees or diplomas received rather than years of school completed. Therefore, to be included under "12 years of education completed," a diploma, GED, or equivalent degree must have been granted.

Source: Calculated by ERS using data from the Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.